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ABSTRACT

Recognizing that all learning must on some level be voluntary, the author draws on his experiences as an educator to explore not-learning as distinct from failure. The refusal to learn can be a reaction to the conditions of schooling, which many learners, particularly those from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds, find irrelevant at best or actually inimical. Not-learning can be a defense, in fact, an intelligent defense, against school systems that represent a hostile society. Not-learning and unlearning are both central techniques that support changes of consciousness and help people develop positive ways of thinking and acting in opposition to dominant forms of oppression. Not-learning can represent a healthy response to racism, sexism, and other forms of bias. For many students, the only alternative to not-learning is confronting social, sexual, and economic oppression in the schools and in society. (SLD)

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